

20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania  
E: dogreview@nre.tas.gov.au

### **Improving Dog Welfare Outcomes in Tasmania**

Animal Care Australia thanks the department for this opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Regulations.

#### **Background:**

Animal Care Australia Inc is a national incorporated association established to consult with government in advocating for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Animal Care Australia represents the interests of all hobbyist and pet animal keepers nationally. Our members are comprised of most major animal keeping representative bodies as well as individual species keepers, including those representing dogs, cats, birds, horses, insects & arachnids, small mammals, reptiles, fish and exhibited animals. Some individual members also work in the rescue, care, and rehabilitation sectors.

#### **Points of note:**

Animal Care Australia is disappointed that the Tasmanian Department of Natural Resources and Environment does not recognise our organisation as an important stakeholder for targeted consultation within the list of stakeholders provided in the Discussion Paper, especially given previous requests to previous Ministers to be included and assurances that we were to be added as a key stakeholder.

Equally, Animal Care Australia has major concerns with the representation on the Animal Welfare Advisory Council<sup>1</sup>. Animal Care Australia continues to expect misleading interpretations of animal behaviour and training within Tasmania’s animal welfare legislation from animal rights/animal protection activists – particularly given the inclusion of Animals Australia on the Animal Welfare Advisory Council and the ongoing animal rights influence that RSPCA Australia maintains on its State Branches. Animals Australia is an organisation that avoids using the term animal rights and instead using the new synonym of "animal protection" or "animal advocacy". However, Lyn White (Director of Strategy) was awarded the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2014 Queen's Birthday Honours for "significant service to the community as an animal rights and welfare advocate". Their website<sup>2</sup> highlights their anti-animal ownership policies.

Animal rights is not animal welfare, rather it is an ideological philosophy which puts forward as fact – that no animals should be used by humans for any reason. Animal rights support the pursuit of incremental welfare as a means to eventually abolishing all animals in captivity. This includes food, labour, and entertainment, among other ways animals exist in modern society. Animal rights organisations have a specific goal in mind: Ending the use of animals by humans

#### **Responses to Discussion Points:**

##### **2.1 - Breeders and Breeding**

**Should Tasmania introduce a cap on the number of fertile bitches at a premises? If so, what do you consider would be an ideal number for a cap between 3 and 50?**

Animal welfare is not about restricting numbers, it is about improving conditions, promoting, and funding greater education programs and the manner in which the government (authorities) deals with those who are unethically breeding.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Animal Welfare Act 1993 – Section 39](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Animals Australia](#)

Fertile bitches' caps in Victoria have resulted in a reduction of responsible breeders (registered breeders) maintaining their ability to breed sufficient puppies for genetic diversity and to keep up with demand. While the majority still remain registered with their Association most were forced to move away from having different breeds and only keep one or two. This has seen a drop in the broader number of responsible bred breeds. This drop has resulted in an increase in demand and subsequently an increase in the market value of the puppies. An increase in market value incentivises other non-registered breeders and irresponsible breeders and this has resulted in an increase in unhealthier animals making their way into the pounds and shelters system. The primary driving force (agenda) for any unethical breeder is profit. This profit comes at the cost of the welfare of the animals, which is the deprivation of physiological and psychological requirements and the five freedoms, which are (supposed to be) the backbone of any animal welfare Act.

At any point in time when there is a greater demand than supply of puppies/kittens this incentivises unethical breeders to produce more animals to satisfy their desire for greater profits. Market price is the ultimate incentive. Would you pay \$4k for a puppy if you could pay \$2k for one?

Any claim that restricting bitch numbers will stop irresponsible breeding or reduce the numbers of shelter animals simply is not supported by shelter numbers across all states of Australia – particularly Victoria where so-called 'puppy farm' legislation has been enacted since 2018. The outcome – recommendations of more shelters, regulation of those shelters and greater funding to expand the Shelter Industry in Victoria.<sup>3</sup>

The Victorian Government are now providing funding grants to shelters so that shelters can cope with the numbers of unethically bred animals being surrendered in Victoria.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, a check of the recorded breeding numbers of registered purebred puppies since the introduction of the Victorian and Western Australian legislation proves the demise of responsible breeding and an increase in the number of breeds now considered to be vulnerable or near extinction in Australia.

#### **Capping numbers:**

Should the Tasmanian government determine there is a need for a cap then Animal Care Australia would recommend the recent NSW model be adopted. This sets a limit of 20 bitches, with infertile bitches being excluded in order for retiring dogs not to be surrendered or euthanised. This is unlike Victoria who do not recognise the fertility of the bitches and this results in many retiring dogs needing to be rehomed or euthanised.

#### **What are your views on banning the breeding of dogs with heritable welfare issues?**

Animal Care Australia does not support the banning of breeding.

Again, responsible breeding and educating the public is the correct objective. A huge proportion of animals (including dogs) have inheritable issues.

Animal Care Australia notes the Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs<sup>5</sup> provides a provision covering the testing for heritable diseases regardless of being a domestic animal establishment (DAE) or not, HOWEVER in both sections (DAE Section G 10.5 and non-DAE Section G8.3) these are guidelines only. These should be standards.

With the recent rise in other countries of banning the breeding of certain brachycephalic breeds of dogs and cats, Animal Care Australia strongly encourages all breeders and breeding associations to improve their breeds by utilising up to date advances in technology to health check their breed through regular relevant health testing to improve the welfare, health and well-being of dogs (and cats).

There is scientific and veterinary research supporting the fact SOME brachycephalic breeds experience unnecessary breathing, brain-related and some spinal (vertebrae) medical conditions. These CAN BE reduced and potentially eradicated through responsible breeding. All breeders are responsible for the health and well-being of their animals – regardless of any standards that may be suggested, or lack of standards.

Breeding programs in other states are having fantastic results in removing specific genes that cause many of these issues, resulting in healthier puppies. If this breeding were to be banned rather than monitored and supported then Australia would see the unnecessary extinction of those breeds.

For the continuation of these breeds in Australia, higher welfare outcomes must always be paramount.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Victorian shelter reforms needed](#) and [Increase in animal fate data requires greater reforms and funding](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Funding Grants Program](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for breeding dogs](#)

### **Should larger scale breeding operations be subject to any additional requirements to ensure compliance with regulations?**

First and foremost: What is a large-scale breeder?

Animal Care Australia again supports the NSW legislation that identified the need for staffing ratios for breeders with more than 20 dogs where litters under 12 weeks of age were counted as one dog, while dogs over 12 weeks of age were counted individually. While this is similar to the standards and guidelines for domestic animal establishments,<sup>6</sup> it appears that most private dog breeders including those registered with an approved organisation, and including working dogs, are exempt. Why?

A staffing ratio is a necessary requirement for ALL dog owners but particularly for those breeding dogs regardless of their scale.

Equally, Animal Care Australia has identified a number of clauses that require some revision – see Appendix 1 – and we strongly recommend the revision of the Animal welfare standards and guidelines for breeding dogs as part of the next step within this review. We also note there is confusion with that document as despite Sections being separated into sections for Domestic Animal Establishments and for other dogs who are not DAE's, overlapping sections of the same 'theme' do not have matching standard or guideline numbers. The example as highlighted above relating to heritable disease testing is Section 10 in one part and Section 8 in the other and yet BOTH are part of the same document. If the intention is to have two separate requirements they should appear in two separate documents OR with different referencing Clauses.

Animal Care Australia encourages regular review of animal welfare codes of practice by all states and territories and a review of the standards & guidelines should be part of the recommendations of this review.

### **What other issues/matters concerning breeders and/or breeding are you able to identify?**

Animal Care Australia supports placing a limit on the number of litters a bitch should have in her lifetime. While we support the introduced numbers in NSW, we additionally supported an exception where veterinary support was permitted under supervised circumstances regardless of the delivery type. The following has been assented in NSW:

*maximum number of deliveries, for an adult dog, means—*

*(a) 3 different deliveries by caesarean delivery, or*

*(b) 5 different deliveries by any method of delivery if—*

*(i) the dog has no more than 3 different deliveries by caesarean delivery, and*

*(ii) the dog has no further deliveries, by any method, after the dog has a third caesarean delivery.*

## **2.2 Identification, Tracing and Licensing**

### **Should Tasmania's microchipping be consistent with other states and territories requiring microchipping by 12 weeks of age?**

For the sake of national consistency Animal Care Australia does not oppose the microchipping age of 12 weeks.

### **What are your views on requiring a kennel licence holder to state whether they are a breeder?**

Animal Care Australia does not support breeders licensing systems as it creates an undue burden and negative stigma of breeders. Tasmania already has a kennel license, which in itself should be sufficient to identify the owners of dogs. From an animal welfare perspective, there should be no differentiation in the standards an owner provides for their dogs regardless of whether they are breeding or not.

### **Should Councils be required to consider extra welfare requirements for dogs kept in group situations?**

No.

Again, animal welfare standards apply regardless of the numbers of dogs being maintained. Animal Care Australia repeats our previous statement that the current *Animal welfare standards & guidelines for dogs* should be reviewed and updated. Once this has been completed there is no reason for Councils to be provided extra powers of implementation. In Victoria, this has resulted in Councils designating their Shires as dog breeder free Shires and refusing to approve any application or licensing by dog breeders.

---

<sup>6</sup> [Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines](#)

**Would you support information sharing amongst animal welfare regulators for the purposes of identifying dog breeders?**

No.

Animal Care Australia does support information sharing for the purpose of monitoring animal welfare outcomes. Nationally animal welfare regulators are able to access limited information about dog and cat owners, however it is limited for very good reason.

Information sharing should only be permitted when a Council identifies animal welfare concern and not simply because a person is a dog breeder.

### **2.3 Handling, Management and Containment**

**Are the current Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations relating to exercise adequate and appropriate? If not, why not?**

All dogs and dog breeds require different levels. There is no one size fits all fix for this.

*(1) A person with care or charge of a dog must ensure that the dog is provided with a reasonable opportunity for exercise for at least 60 minutes in total each day.*

*(2) In addition to sub-regulation (1), a person in charge of a facility must ensure that each dog that is more than 6 months of age at the facility –*

*(a) as part of the total period of daily exercise specified in that subsection, is provided with the opportunity for exercise at least twice a day for a period of no less than 10 minutes each time; and*

The above regulation clearly states 'a reasonable opportunity for at least 60 minutes' This does NOT limit the amount of exercise anyone can provide. What it does do is clarify that it is unreasonable for a dog to have less than 60 minutes.

Adding subclause (2) into the equation requires dogs within kennels to be exercised at twice but still at no less than 60 minutes in a day

*(1) Subject to sub regulation (2), a person with care or charge of a dog must not tether the dog for a continuous period of more than 30 minutes unless –*

*(a) the dog shows acceptance of being tethered and is not distressed as a result of the tethering; and*

*(b) the dog is being supervised while tethered; and*

*(c) the dog has access to water and weatherproof shelter while tethered; and*

*(d) the tether is fitted with a swivel that was inspected, to ensure it was in working condition, before the dog was tethered; and*

*(e) the dog is provided with daily exercise off the tether in accordance with these regulations.*

The wording in the Discussion Paper and attempt to blur all three sections of exercise, kenneling and tethering into one broad statement is a clear contrived attempt to achieve a specific response. This attempt to force the ideologies of the animal rights activists within your Animal Welfare Advisory Committee onto all dog owners is disappointing and has not gone un-noticed by Animal Care Australia.

**Do you consider the current training guidelines deliver an appropriate level of advice?**

Animal Care Australia notes the Discussion Paper refers to supporting literature highlighting claims as to the effectiveness and impact of various dog training methods. It is been noted 2.3.1 Training techniques strongly promotes evidence-based, reward-based training methods that align with the 'supposed' and yet non-referenced literature.

Would this be because the position and direction of the discussion paper are again being influenced by the ideological beliefs of those on the Animal Welfare advisory Committee.

Without providing supporting evidence makes it difficult for those with expertise in training to be able to adequately respond. For those without expertise, broad unsupported ideological statements are more easily believable by a gullible public. Animal Care Australia does not doubt that this is the intention.

It is vital to acknowledge that legislating any single training or behavioural modifying approach will undermine the very welfare it seeks to protect, as it provides only one option to address every dog. Dogs vary, their behaviour varies and so do the solutions and options. Anyone who states that a single reward only approach is effective for all dogs is blurring ideological rhetoric lacking expertise and scientific support.

Before proceeding with any legislation that prescribes specific dog training methodologies, Animal Care Australia strongly recommends the following:

**1. Provide Referenced Literature for reviews:**

Ensure that all research referenced or being utilised by the AWAC is made readily accessible to stakeholders and the public. There needs to be greater transparency, in order for an informed consultation to take place.

**2. Engage in Collaborative Consultation:**

As in other states and territories, in person consultations with a broad spectrum of key dog keeping and training stakeholders, including accredited trainers, animal behaviourists, veterinarians, animal welfare (not animal protection or animal rights) organisations, and industry representatives MUST be held.

**3. Aim for a framework that is based on accredited reporting and regular review:**

Outcomes that focus on greater education, improved understanding of welfare outcomes and ongoing review should be the primary goal of this review.

**Should Tasmania’s legislative framework consider provisions for electric collars?**

Animal Care Australia notes the direct reference to the banning of e-collars in some states. We want to strongly point out these bans were introduced WITHOUT full consultation with the directly affected key stakeholders.

We also note then and now the ‘claimed’ supporting literature for banning eCollars was not included in the consultation for comment. Without access to the cited evidence and supporting data, it is not possible to evaluate and collaboratively respond. Is this because when cited research has been sought utilising freedom of information requests, the research has either been unavailable or when provided has been easily discounted – albeit way too late to undo the bans. Is this the intention here? If not, then the department and the Government should provide all cited research.

An outright ban of eCollar training for dogs will have significant implications that are in direct conflict with animal welfare outcomes. While the ‘claim’ of a ban is to ensure the humane treatment of animals this is not true in practicality.

Animal Care Australia fully supports the following information from the Profession Dog Trainers of Australia. The PDTA **ARE THE EXPERTS**. They save dogs lives. The RSPCA whose research is usually that cited ARE NOT. In fact, they have the highest kill rates in the country with behavioural reasons cited for euthanising the dogs. Animal Care Australia relies on the experts – not an organisation that kills simply because it is inconvenient to take the time to accurately assess and train a dog with behavioural issues.

The impacts of an eCollar ban as outlined by the professionals are:

**Loss of a Tool for Specific Behavioural Issues:** E-collars are often used as a last resort for dogs with severe behavioural problems, such as aggression, predatory chasing, or livestock harassment. Without e-collars, trainers and owners may struggle to address these issues effectively, leading to potential safety risks for people, other animals, or the dog itself. This fact has been well established in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

**Limited Training Options:** Not all dogs respond to traditional positive reinforcement or aversive-free methods, especially in high-distraction or high-stakes environments. E-collars can provide a consistent and timely corrections.

**Increased Surrender or Euthanasia:** Owners of dogs with unmanageable behavioural issues may feel they have no other option but to surrender their dogs to shelters or consider euthanasia when prolonged, alternative training methods fail.

**Reduced Off-Leash Freedoms:** E-collars are sometimes used to train dogs for off-leash reliability, particularly for working dogs, hunting dogs, or active pets in rural areas. Without this tool, some owners may feel less confident allowing their dogs off-leash, which can reduce their quality of life and ultimately their welfare.

**Potential for Less Effective Alternatives:** If poorly regulated or understood, alternative training tools might be used incorrectly, causing physical or psychological harm which is in direct conflict with animal welfare goals.

**Economic Impact:** Professional dog trainers who specialize in e-collar training may face economic challenges if this training method is banned, potentially leading to job loss or the decline of niche businesses in Tasmania.

**Disempowered Owners:** Owners of dogs with unique needs may feel they lack autonomy in making decisions about their dogs. This can erode trust in government regulations and lead some to seek underground or unregulated training options. Bans often lead to unregulated, underground markets where tools are sold without oversight, increasing the risk of improper use and harm to dogs.

**Compliance Issues:** In areas where e-collars are banned, individuals may still obtain them illegally. Without proper guidance, misuse of these devices may increase, leading to greater harm than if they were regulated and used appropriately.

**Contextual Misalignment for farming communities:** In farming communities, e-collars are an integral tool for managing working dogs and ensuring safety. A ban may not consider these specific needs, leading to unintended consequences.

**Ineffectiveness in Addressing Root Issues:** Banning e-collars does not address the root causes of misuse, such as lack of education or poor training practices. Without widespread education about dog behaviour and humane training methods, the underlying issues may persist.

### **Animal Care Australia strongly recommends Regulating eCollar Use NOT banning it.**

Regulating ensures animal welfare is being upheld while allowing for the correct and responsible use. This is critical in improving the lives of dogs and their owners. A ban eliminates this possibility, potentially leading to worse outcomes for the very animals it seeks to protect.

Please see Appendix 2 for more information regarding the correct use of e-collars as well as supporting references – unlike the Discussion Paper.

### **Do you think the tethering regulation is ambiguous? If so, how might it be made clearer?**

No. As stated above it is not ambiguous. The mere inclusion of the second half of this question again shows a determination to reach a specific outcome.

If no such determination was intended the first question would have been followed with: please explain'

## **2.4 Facilities, Housing and Sleeping**

### **Do you consider the current minimum housing and sleeping area requirements outlined in the Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations are adequate? If not, please advise where you think they could be improved.**

Animal Care Australia supports the need for housing to require the removal of waste, faeces, and urine, subject to sighting any proposed wording.

Regarding sleeping the current requirement is clear:

- *The areas where the dog is likely to sleep be checked daily; and **maintained in a clean, dry condition**; and*

Clean does equal removal of waste, faeces and urine and any other dirt or bodily excrement.

Dry does equal no remaining urine or being wet from spillage etc.

Surely an enforcement officer is smart enough to determine that without requiring additional wording?

### **Do you consider the environmental enrichment section of the Animal Welfare Dog Guidelines to be adequate? If not, why not?**

Yes, it is. Clearly the greater the opportunity of enrichment and the sooner the intervention of behaviour resulting from a lack of enrichment the better. This is why Animal Care Australia recommends Guidelines 4.1 – 4.5 should be standards. Noting the Guidelines take into account the specific needs of the breed this supports there is no one size fits all solution.

If the Animal Welfare Advisory Council is trying to tell you differently – more reason to review the membership of that Council.

## **2.5 Transport**

### **Should there be similar requirements for road, air, and sea modes of dog transport? If not, why not?**

What is this question asking or more importantly trying to achieve?



Section 14 of the Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations 2016 has very clear requirements for the transportation of dogs regardless of road, air or sea.

The Discussion Paper highlights: *“Trans-Tasman Line operating the Spirit of Tasmania I and II ferries have further specific requirements for the carriage of animals.”*

Animal Care Australia notes QANTAS <sup>7</sup> has an entire section on its requirements for pets to travel including brachycephalic breeds. Virgin Airlines <sup>8</sup> has its own equivalent. The decision on any given day to fly is determined by the airline and/or the owner.

## 2.6 Exemptions

### **Should the current exemptions for members of Dogs Tasmania, greyhounds and working dogs continue?**

Animal Care Australia does not support any exemptions from a fit for purpose Animal welfare Code of Practice (COP). If as stated the breeding association has standards higher than those legislated, then what exactly are they exempt from? A quick check of the membership requirement within their Code of Ethics<sup>9</sup> highlights members must abide by any Government regulations (COE Section 5 (1) ). Are they the same regulations the exemption applies to?

Animal Care Australia notes an absence of the inclusion of a breeder accreditation program within Dogs Tasmania. If true, this is different to Dogs NSW, Dogs Victoria, etc. This raises the question as to what quality or higher standards are Dogs Tasmania members required to meet and how does Dogs Tasmania enforce/ensure that compliance?

While an existing Code of Practice with standards & guidelines is in place for greyhounds that is providing the appropriate breed specific requirements, Animal Care Australia does not object to an exemption, with the caveat that the same welfare requirements as other dogs are included in that COP.

Animal Care Australia does not support the current exemptions for working dogs unless bred for the purpose of being working dogs. Recent exemptions in NSW provided for exemptions while the dogs remained on rural/farming land for the purpose of being working dogs. These breeds are no longer exempt when owned in any other capacity. We hold this position because working dog breeds are being bred and sold as companion animals, and making their way into the shelter system in disproportionate numbers, therefore those animals should not be exempt.

### **In conclusion:**

A new ‘fit for purpose’ Code of Practice is required to ensure appropriate compliance requirements/standards are provided that are situation and breed specific. All dogs (and cats) are entitled to be bred under the same welfare standards.

It is important to re-iterate, much of the wording in the Discussion Paper is a clear contrived attempt to achieve a specific response. This attempt to force the ideologies of the animal rights activists represented on your Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is disappointing and has not gone un-noticed by Animal Care Australia. These ideologies should not be supported by the department or government.

This submission can be publicly listed.

Should you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact us, as we welcome the opportunity to meet with you.

On behalf of the Animal Care Australia Committee.



Michael Donnelly  
President

*This submission has been developed in consultation with members of Animal Care Australia, in particular, representatives from the Animal Care Australia Dog Advisory Groups.*

---

<sup>7</sup> [QANTAS Pet Travel](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Virgin Pet travel](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Dogs Tasmania Code of Ethics](#)

## **Appendix 1: Animal welfare standards and guidelines for dogs – clauses that require review:**

### **Dogs in Domestic Animal Establishments:**

1.2 A person must attend the facility each day to meet the requirements of these standards, and must have the relevant knowledge, experience, and skills to provide for:

- the care and welfare of dogs.
- the feeding and watering of dogs.
- the reasonable protection of dogs from distress and injury.
- cleaning and proper hygiene in the facility; and
- identification of signs of ill health and common diseases of dogs.

What evidence (if any) is needed to show this has occurred and is there a minimum or set criteria to prove knowledge/experience?

Animal Care Australia questions this as the wording is ambiguous which leads to the 'discretion' of an inspector as the deciding factor. Our evidence shows the RSPCA is unlikely to use discretion and more often aims to penalise or charge a person with an offence.

### **Guidelines that should be standards:**

G 2.1 – G 2.7 – Quality Management Systems

G 4.1 – G 4.5 – Animal Management - Care

Animal Care Australia notes the inclusion of positive socialisation from 3 weeks? Socialisation is the wrong word it should be desensitisation and enrichment.

G 5.1 -G 5.5 – Animal Management – Food and Water

G 9.1 - G 9.2 - Health - Euthanasia

G 10.5 – Breeding and rearing

### **Dogs other than those in the care of Domestic Animal Establishments: Guidelines that should be standards:**

G 2.1 – G 2.5 – Animal Management - Care

Animal Care Australia notes this should go to G 2.6 - as the G 2.2 is repeated but with different Guidelines.

G 3.1 -G 3.5 – Animal Management – Food and Water

G 8.1 and G 8.3 – Breeding and rearing



## Appendix 2: Modern Electronic Training Collar Technology

Electronic training collars (also known as remote electronic training collars, or electronic training aids ETA's), were first developed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Initially, the devices were rudimentary and used primarily for training hunting dogs. As technology advanced, so did the design and functionality of electric training collars eventually being developed into what has become one of the most sophisticated and versatile training tools available in dog training today [4].

It is a common misconception that electronic training collars utilise 'shock' in their operation. 'Shock collar' was never an official term for the tool, but rather, a slang term which does not accurately represent the technology.

Various organisations that had previously used the term shock or shock collar: have now withdrawn that terminology. By way of example the Companion Animal Welfare Council published a review of electronic collars studies (CAWC 2012) in which it deliberately did not use the term 'shock' at all because it is both inaccurate and 'associated with biased personal opinion and emotional connotations. [5]. An opinion shared by many authorities, as described in Steve Lindsay's extensively researched three volume Handbook of Applied Behaviour and Training:

*"The term 'shock' is hardly fitting to describe the effects produced by electronic training collars, since there is virtually no effect beyond a pulsing, tingling or tickling sensation on the surface of the skin. The word "shock" is loaded with biased connotations."* [6]

The technology used in modern e-collars is in fact the same used in TENS machine technology. A transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) device is used as an alternative to painkilling medication and in physiotherapy for injury treatment and recovery. TENS machines work by delivering electrical impulses (stimulation) through electrodes attached to the skin.

The following from a training article on electronic collars:

*"Electronic collars utilise Electronic Stimulation (ES) **not electric shock**. Electronic stimulation is the **artificial stimulation** of living tissue by means of an electric field or current (IEC). The ES delivered by modern electronic collars is transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), which artificially stimulates nerves and sensory receptors. TENS has no injurious consequences and is often used to manage chronic pain in humans" [7]*

ES is quite different from actual electric shock, as the sudden application of electric current to a living organism with sufficient strength and duration to produce a convulsive or thermal effect (IEC) with injurious exposure consequences [8].

From a study conducted by the University of Lincoln UK, Department of Biological Sciences, Lines et al 2013:

*"In this investigation, the stimulus strengths of e-collars were measured and compared...the highest voltages are present for only a few microseconds, and **do not indicate an obvious welfare concern.**" [9]*

In addition, Lines et al 2013 is another study that refrains completely from using the word shock, and correctly refers to it as stimulation, thus maintaining their scientific and professional integrity.

While there is not a single legal case on file in Australia involving harm done by an e-collar, the word shock is still used, albeit less frequently. Propaganda and bias are still prevalent in organisations that oppose their use based on unsubstantiated claims, such as defamation resulting in the Orion v RSPCA VIC court case that ruled **against the RSPCA due to inaccurate and misleading information regarding electronic collars** [10].

### Remote Electronic Training Collar Training Uses

What can the Remote Trainer E-Collar be used for ?

1. It is used to increase reliability and performance standards of already trained behaviours.
2. It can be used to solve problems created by poor initial training or inappropriate prior learning.
3. It can be used to reduce or eliminate or manage many unwanted behaviours.
4. It is used to communicate information or directives to the dog.

E-collar training methods utilise various aspects of learning theory including both operant and classical conditioning (see Appendix A).

The following section outlines specific issues facing communities as well as the unparalleled solutions e-collar methods provide.

### **Predatory Attacks**

Predatory attacks by domestic dogs are an increasing issue impacting Australian rural, and semi-rural communities, and due to urban sprawl, dog populations in semi-rural areas are increasing as are predatory attacks, putting financial and emotional strain on farmers, dog owners and the community as a whole.

Aggressive behaviour can be classed as two distinct types: The first (which includes a number of sub-types) is defensive in nature, reflecting a real or perceived threat, is emotionally unpleasant to the dog and is triggered by the amygdala in the brain (fight-flight response) [11]. The second type is predatory aggression.

Predatory aggression is uniquely different from all other forms of aggression in that it involves different regions of the brain and positive emotional states. More specifically, predatory aggression (aka predation or predatory behaviour) involves the SEEKING System; a euphoric state of motivation and anticipation (releasing the feel-good neuro-chemical dopamine), which is self-reinforcing and biological fulfilling to a dog [12].

### **Livestock Attacks**

Unlike wild canids such as wolves who aim to kill prey quickly and efficiently, livestock attacked by dogs often undergo prolonged suffering. Hunger is not the motivator in domestic dogs as attacked livestock are not usually consumed. Dogs chase animals down for long periods and will attack any part of the body and many attacks will involve multiple animals. Often livestock will not die quickly as a result of their injuries, but may perish due to exhaustion and shock, drown as a result of being chased into water, from loss of blood or secondary infections, or be shot when farmers eventually locate them [13] [14].

A few of the many accounts of attacks, include a 2023 example in Western Australia involving 59 sheep, and one emu being attacked by two dogs. The farmer reported bodies being littered all over his paddock and dam of dead and dying animals. Only two days later the same farmer assisted his neighbour in euthanizing some of their sheep after 19 were attacked by the same two dogs. The dogs were eventually caught and put down and the owner fined [15].

In Victoria, one 2023 report highlights an increase in dog attacks on prey animals such as horses, sheep and chickens [16], another describes 11 sheep being attacked on one property of which the farmer states:

"Our ewes are about to start lambing and another attack during lambing could devastate our farm business for this season... We are effectively under siege from people moving to country blocks, who are often from a city background with little or no awareness of farming realities." [17].

It is important to reiterate that dogs who have had success attacking prey animals will likely attack again. As already discussed, predatory behaviour is biologically fulfilling and self-reinforcing. Research, specifically looking at predatory aggression in Australia has shown that: "Unless dogs were destroyed, contained or relocated by their owners they were likely to attack again" [14].

### **Costs to Community**

Numerous costs affect communities as a result of predatory attacks.

For farmers, this includes financial losses due to loss of time, loss of business related to animals, loss of animals (including breeding animals), damage to property and veterinary costs. Farmers also suffer the emotional effects of discovering killed and suffering sheep, lambs, and other farm animals. The task of destroying animals and the fear of future attacks, and also the strained relations and legal battles with neighbours or locals owning the dogs responsible.

Dog owners face the financial impact of legal fees and council fines, veterinary costs and fencing, containment of their property and dog training costs. Emotionally, owners face the impact of losing their pets, the guilt of responsibility and the anger of farmers and their community and fear of their current or future dogs attacking again.

### **Management and Education**

Management via adequate fencing, containment in kennels and runs, as well as keeping dogs inside and on leashes are all options to prevent dogs from coming into contact with livestock. On semi-rural and rural properties, however, the cost of adequate fencing that a dog cannot escape is not financially possible for many, and dogs cannot be inside or in kennels all the time. And while owners may do the right thing by keeping their dog on leash, leashes do get dropped from time to time.

Increasing penalties to owners after their dog has attacked does not stop the attack in the first place, while owner education on canine predation and dog control via council officers all contribute, even the most responsible owners can have instances of management failing and their dog getting out, and council officers cannot monitor each property and dog.

### **E-collar Training for Predation**

The only effective way to stop a dog attacking livestock is to train avoidance behaviour. Effective training gives peace of mind that if management fails, or after a dog has previously come into contact with livestock, there is a safety in place to stop dogs wanting to approach livestock in the first place.

E-collar training involves pairing an aversive stimuli with the chase phase of the predatory sequence. The result is that stalking / chasing the prey animal is no longer reinforcing and creates a conditioned aversion to the behaviour and animal, resulting in a dog wanting to avoid the animal all together.

E-collar training for predation is the only training method that shows efficacy in stopping predation, both in research and in the field.

### **Evidence in Literature: E-collar training for predation:**

Experimental research looking at training methods for specific training criteria is limited, however, e-collar training for predation is one of the exceptions.

As previously outlined in this submission, predation is a self-reinforcing behaviour; it feels good to a dog. This means positive reinforcement methods are unlikely to effectively stop predatory aggression, especially in the context where attacks usually occur, and to date there is no research or evidence in the field to suggest otherwise:

“While positive reinforcement can be used exclusively for certain behaviours, it’s suggested in the context of instinctive motor patterns [the predatory sequence], negative reinforcement and positive punishment may be desirable and necessary additions to positive reinforcement technique.” [18].

Christiansen (2001) looked specifically at canine predatory behaviour in regard to sheep and concluded:

“Aversive conditioning with the use of [e-collars] is an efficient method for reducing the probability of a dog chasing or attacking sheep on pasture... no adverse effect of this was observed.” [19]

Not only does research demonstrate efficacy of e-collar training for predation in dogs, but it has also been shown effective in wild canids such as wolves and coyotes; predators with the full, instinctual predatory sequence on which an animals survival depends. Even with this biological drive, research shows classically conditioned aversion to be effective:

“[e-collar] averted all 13 attempted attacks on lambs. Prey killing aversion can be most readily established by applying response contingent aversive stimuli during the chase and attack phase of the predatory sequence.” [20].

In New Zealand, e-collar aversion training is utilised as part of a government conservation scheme working with approved, experienced dog trainers to save flightless Kiwi birds from extinction [21]. Dogs are one of the leading causes for declining Kiwi numbers [22], yet Kiwi habitat includes areas where dogs are present on rural and semi-rural properties and hunting dogs are also utilised in remote areas to control numbers of feral pigs which damage fragile eco-systems. Dogs are not permitted in areas Kiwi are present unless dogs are certified having undergone aversion training.

The New Zealand Kiwi avoidance training scheme is an excellent example of application of experimental research as a real-world solution:

“Majority of dogs avoided KAT stimuli [Kiwi aversion training) regardless of whether an electric collar was worn, and that the training generalised to other locations and lasted at least one year.” [22] [23]

Included in this area is snake aversion training, an issue that impacts hundreds of dogs and owners every year which management often fails to stop. Snake aversion training utilises the same approach as methods already broken down via research above.

While there are positive reinforcement/'Force Free' type approaches available for predation and snake avoidance training, there is no evidence in research or the field supporting effectiveness, or any precedent to suggest they would be considering the nature of predation and its instinctual drivers. These programs are offered based on the theoretical assumption of 'better welfare' as a reaction to e-collar training misinformation, but this assumption discounts the welfare implications of growing livestock attacks, subsequent destruction of the dogs involved and dogs injured or killed as a result of snake bites.

When it comes to welfare implications of e-collar training, not only does experimental research demonstrate effectiveness without welfare concerns [5] [8] [18] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] but research by Salgirli et al (2012) specifically comparing a 'Force Free' approach with e-collar training demonstrated both a higher learning effect and **less stress**, than the Force Free method, which showed lowest learning effect and higher stress [26].

#### References:

1. (<https://www.nfu-cymru.org.uk/news-and-information/cost-of-dog-attacks-on-livestock-in-wales-more-than-doubles/>)
2. <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/path=%2FC%2FR%2FANIMAL%20WELFARE%20REGULATIONS%202012>
3. Animal Medicines Australia (2022) Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people [AMAU008-Pet-Ownership22-Report\\_v1.6\\_WEB.pdf \(animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au\)](https://www.amau008-pet-ownership22-report-v1.6-web.pdf)
4. Hooper, B. Remote Trainer / E-Collar: Overview & Fundamentals. Tactical and Specialist K9 (TASK-9).
5. The Use of Electric Pulse Training Aids (EPTAs) in Companion Animals: CAWC (2012)
6. Lindsay, S. (2008) Applied Behaviour and Training. Volumes 1-3. Wiley-Blackwell.
7. Why the term "shock collar" is not accurate and propagandized <https://hiddenfence.com.au/shock-collars-used-on-dogs-are-they-safe/>
8. Reilly, J, P. Applied Bioelectricity: from electrical stimulation to electro pathology, New York: Springer, 1998.
9. Lines, J. (2013) Characteristics of electronic training collars for dogs. Vet Rec.
10. FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA (2002) Orion Pet Products Pty Ltd v Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Vic) FCA 860
11. Coria-Avila, GA. et al. (2022) The Neurobiology of Behavior and Its Applicability for Animal Welfare: A Review. Animals (Basel). doi: 10.3390/ani12070928.
12. Panksepp, J. (2004) Affective Neuroscience: The foundations of human and animal emotions. Oxford university press.
13. Polsky, R. (1974) Hunger, prey feeding, and predatory aggression, Behavioral Biology Vol 13.
14. Jennens, G. (2002) Domestic Dog Attacks on Sheep in the Urban Fringe Areas of Perth, Western Australia. [Doctoral thesis, Murdoch University]
15. Robinson, T. (2023) Dogs destroyed, owner fined after fatal attacks on sheep at Collie, WA. ABC News <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-08/south-west-dog-attacks-owner-fined-dogs-destroyed-sheep-killed/102829074>
16. Community Safety (2023) Increase in Reported Dog attacks. Gold Plains Shire, Vic. <https://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/news/increase-reported-dog-attacks>
17. Gray, D. (2016) Worrying trend on urban fringe leaves sheep mauled, dog shot and farmer fuming. The Age. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/worrying-trend-on-urban-fringe-leaves-sheep-mauled-dog-shot-and-farmer-fuming-20160620-gpnjxw.html>
18. Marshark, E. et al (2002) Modifications of instinctive herding dog behavior using reinforcement and punishment. Anthrozoös. 15:1
19. Christiansen, F. (2001) Behavioural changes and aversive conditioning in hunting dogs by the second-year confrontation with domestic sheep. Applied Animal Behaviour Science.
20. Andelt, W. et al (1999) Coyote predation on domestic sheep deterred with electronic dog-training collar. Wildlife Society Bulletin. 27
21. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/dog-access/avian-awareness-and-avoidance-training/>

22. Dale et al. (2013). Acquisition & maintenance of dogs' aversion responses to kiwi training stimuli across time and locations. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*. 146.
23. Dale, et al. (2017). Evaluation of an aversion-based program designed to reduce predation of native birds by dogs: An analysis of training records for 1156 dogs, *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 191,
24. Tortora DF. (1983) Safety training: the elimination of avoidance-motivated aggression in dogs. *J Exp Psychol Gen*. Jun;112(2)
25. Coleman & Murray (2001) Collar mounted electronic devices for behaviour modification in dogs  
[http://aiam.org.au/resources/Documents/2000%20UAM/PUB\\_Pro00\\_TaniaColeman\\_RichardMurray.pdf](http://aiam.org.au/resources/Documents/2000%20UAM/PUB_Pro00_TaniaColeman_RichardMurray.pdf)
26. Salgirli, et al. (2012). Comparison of learning effects and stress between 3 different training methods (Electronic training collar, pinch collar and quitting signal) in Belgian Malinois Police Dogs. *Revue de médecine vétérinaire*. 163.